

a supermarket horror story

by M. F. Sullivan

stoned,
i made the mistake
of walking to the store across the busy street
to find myself in the middle
of the pep-up
for a basketball game
or something like that.

i have never liked sports
and liked people less,
and people in stores less than that,
so i avoided eye contact with everyone wearing a jersey,

let's make it out without incident.
four things to get,
pomade, toilet paper, steak, and butter.

the pomade took three minutes of searching
and one of deliberation.

tub in-hand,
i made for the wall of toilet paper
at the only quiet end of the store
where i could almost breathe
until in the corner of my vision
appeared a horror-movie red blur.

i turned,
and found a cardinal,

six feet tall,
black mouth gaping,
wearing a red jersey.

i have always liked mascots
less than any aforementioned.

it spread its arms,
nodded,
hugged me from the side.

weakly, i laughed
then said,
'no,'
and,
'no, not at all. that's okay.'

it nodded again,
flashing a thumbs-up,
and moved down an aisle.

i never saw it disappear around the corner,
and later,
after finding the steaks and butter,
as i emerged to the parking lot
shimmering with arizona heat,
there it was in the distance.

it was coming
right
for
me.

i made a sharp left
and walked home

weary of birds
singing in the treetops.

